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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit agencies involved in child welfare are increasingly interested in generating publicity for their work and improving their organization's public image. This booklet compiles information, tips, and resources helpful to public relations and communications professionals and agency personnel responsible for handling media relations for child welfare agencies. Section 1 deals with a variety of selected media topics, including strategies for responding for incoming press calls, creating news releases and statements, taking advantage of editorial boards and opinion pieces, keeping press lists up to date, conducting press conferences, preparing for interviews, developing public service campaigns, and using satellite media tours. Part 2 discusses issues and strategies related to confidentiality, crisis situations, social marketing, and a communications/public relations plan. Part 3 considers the use of the Internet to obtain information, as well as agency publications, a speakers' bureau, special event and promotions, and archiving of previous public relations materials. (KB)

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ED 430 728

Advancing the Message

Tips & Suggestions for Communications People in Child Welfare Agencies

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Overview

Recent years have brought a spate of handbooks on obtaining publicity for nonprofit organizations and improving an organization's image. Free or inexpensive seminars on the topics are widely available. Interest in tips on positive press and effective communications for nonprofit agencies—and for profit-making human service agencies—continues to grow.

It is important to state the obvious: This little book is not masquerading as an exhaustive, encyclopedic work on media relations. Rather, it pulls together bits of information, tips and resources that will be helpful to people in child welfare work—public relations and communications professionals as well as agency executives, managers and others who are responsible for their organizations' press activity along with their "real" jobs.

The content of this book is based on information child welfare people need in order to do their jobs better, as determined by responses to a nationally distributed questionnaire and discussion at various workshops. Some thought was given to presenting the information in straightforward chapters such as "Print," "Radio" and "TV," but it felt better to go with subject heads that reflect principal areas of interest as expressed by those in the field.

Regardless of the extent of your agency's media contact or communications planning, cultural sensitivity must be a paramount concern. Whether you are designing proactive communications campaigns and messages or responding to press initiatives, cultural sensitivity to people involved in child welfare, both clients and staff, must always be in evidence. This sensitivity must extend beyond the content of the message itself to who gives the message and how the message is communicated or depicted.

Nearly two-thirds of the children in out-of-home care in the United States are children of color—African Americans, Latinos and others.* This number correlates closely with the number of children served by public child welfare agencies overall.

Where appropriate, messages should be translated from English to other

* Toshio Tatara, American Public Welfare Association, Washington, DC.

languages and should reflect the client population's idiom and style. In places with large populations of African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Asians, Aleuts or Hawaiians, communications personnel who are responsible for their agency's messages must be as sensitive to cultural issues as the child welfare workers who directly assist clients. To ignore cultural mores, behaviors and standards is to risk denigration of an individual's or a group's cultural characteristics.

Selected Media Topics

Incoming Press Calls

The rules of thumb for responding to press calls are clear and obvious: Respond to inquiries promptly and truthfully. When the situation calls for it, don't hesitate to let reporters and other journalists know that you'll need to get back to them with information that is not readily available. Always check on the reporter's deadline, to be sure you don't blow it.

PRESS CALL

Name _____ Date _____
Organization _____ Time _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Phone _____ Fax _____
Information requested _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
Arrangements _____
_____
_____
Person to be interviewed [phone/in person] _____

Deadline _____
Staff person taking call _____

Sample Log-in Form

Also, try to ensure that all inquiries come into the press office or the office of the person charged with media activity. This can be a challenge in some settings, but having one person handling press calls rather than many facilitates coordination of press activity (Who's calling? What information is requested? Which staff members are scheduled for interviews? Is more than one reporter from a given paper seeking information for a particular story or series?). The sample inquiry log-in form on this page is typical of what agencies use to log in each and every press call. Good records are essential for efficient follow-up and for accurate reporting.

Resources

While all child welfare agencies have concerns around confidentiality, public agencies have particular problems and considerations with regard to media inquiries. Some public child welfare agencies put out their own news media guides to help employees understand the issues and appreciate confidentiality rules and regulations. Others advise staff of how to handle press inquiries or require all press calls to be filtered through the press office. Take a look at sample local materials—Oregon's Department of Human Resources Children's Services Division has excellent guidelines, as does the Harris County (Houston, Texas) Children's Protective Services, which publishes a news media relations operations manual for managers. Another option is to check with other city, county and state child welfare agencies to find out about locally tailored material. Some private, nonprofit agencies also have guidelines.

News Releases and Statements

Much advice is available on writing news releases—the who, what, when, where and why—but not a lot is said about making the decision whether or not to issue a release. Look first at the activity—namely, issuing a NEWS release—and determine if indeed your organization has some NEWS to share.

CWLA news release

Child Welfare League of America • 440 First Street, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20001-2085 • 202/638-2952 • FAX 202/638-4004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 22, 1996

CONTACT Joyce Johnson
202/942-0244

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE APPLAUDS TAX CREDIT FOR SPECIAL ADOPTIONS

Washington DC— When President Clinton signed legislation this week to raise the minimum wage, he also signed into law provisions that will grant nonrefundable tax credits for expenses incurred in adoption. The bill calls for a $5,000 tax credit for adoptive families beginning the first of next year, to cover such expenses as adoption fees, court costs, attorney's fees and other costs directly related to the legal adoption of a child.

Since nearly 70% of adoptions handled by public agencies across the country involve special-needs children—older children and teenagers, children who are part of sibling groups, and those who are challenged physically, emotionally or developmentally—officials of the Child Welfare League of America expressed particular satisfaction with the fact that the bill also provides a $6,000 tax credit for families adopting children with special needs.

CWLA Executive Director David S. Liederman said, "Too many children with special needs are likely to languish in foster care for years. This new incentive to adopt is definitely in the best interest of children most in need. There are no prolonged delays for infants of any color in finding loving homes. But for children with special needs, the delays can seem exhausting and eternal."

CWLA is the nation's leading membership organization devoted to improving life for abused, neglected and vulnerable children and their families. The organization has worked for legislation to increase opportunities for children to move from foster and residential care to adoptive homes. Many of CWLA's 900 member agencies provide adoption services.

###

Sample News Release

When issuing a release, keep in mind that, in addition to

being newsworthy, interesting and well written, your release should be clear and concise, get to the point quickly, include good quotes where appropriate, and not be hyperbolic or puffy. Since few news organizations use the release "as is," it should elicit enough interest for the recipient to want to follow up.

If your agency wishes to respond to a relevant hot topic or some other matter, a statement generally attributed to the agency executive director or CEO is relatively easy to issue. Make sure you get the statement to the wire service so that local media have access to it, and also consider faxing it to key reporters you regularly communicate with, to be sure they receive it, especially when next-day stories are involved.

Editorial Boards and Opinion Pieces

Besides sending releases to the media and pitching "good news" stories, child welfare agencies should take advantage of editorial boards, opinion (op ed) pages and letters to the editor. It is important to poll members of the agency's board of directors to learn of their contacts at news organizations. Consider submitting some material under the byline of one of your agency's board members.

Editorial Boards

To arrange an editorial board—a meeting including one or more of a newspaper's staff members who write the editorials, any reporters who have a special interest in the topic to be discussed, and representatives of your agency—call or write a paper's editorial director or a member of the editorial board to present your issue and request a face-to-face meeting. Since most editorialists write in the afternoon or early evening for the next day's paper, it is best to call during the morning. Papers are generally good about responding to requests—either they will have an interest in your issue or they will not.

If you are invited to meet with the editorial board, you will want to take along the right people and material to make the best case, as the goal is usually to have the paper write an editorial favoring your position. You might want to invite a member of your agency's board to accompany the director or CEO to the editorial board.

Opinion Pieces

Opinion pieces can be submitted to the editor of the op ed page. Call each paper to which you plan to submit to learn its requirements with respect to the length of the piece, where to send it, and other information needed (i.e., the author's Social Security number, day/evening phone numbers).

Keep a vigilant watch for newspaper articles to which your agency might reply with a letter to the editor. Again, you should call to get specifics on each paper's needs. The same holds true for magazines, which also offer opportunities for letters, opinion pieces, and sometimes, editorial boards.

Press Lists

It is important to keep press lists up to date, so that you'll be able to (a) reach the people you need to reach, and (b) avoid mailing to people who have left a particular media organization or changed beats. Agencies that are heavily involved with the media may need to maintain several lists. These could include a broad press list of just about everyone you want to reach—local and otherwise—with news from your agency, a list of political writers and columnists, and a special list of those you invite to press conferences and press briefings. You may wish to list the futures editors and assignment editors, for quick reference when making phone calls.

In putting together your broad list, be sure to include contact people beyond those connected with your local daily newspapers and commercial radio and television stations. Remember to include contacts from the weekly and monthly papers, magazines, cable TV stations, public radio, college and university publications, and all the publications and stations aimed at minority populations in your area—African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American and others.

Resources

In most locations, you can find one or another type of media directory. Many daily newspapers publish information on their staffs—names/phone numbers for various types of stories, deadline information, etc. Some local United Ways publish media factbooks that provide detailed information

on local broadcast and print media in a given area. For press and public information people who need national listings, several reference guides are available, including Gebbie Press's *All-in-One Directory* (914/255–7560); Burrelle's four-volume media directory (201/992–6600); and Leadership Directory's *News Media Yellow Book,* which lists reporters, editors and producers in national news media (212/627-4140).

Press Conferences

A well-produced press conference requires time, energy and money. When considering whether to conduct a press conference, ask yourself the following questions.

- Is the news important enough to attract reporters and journalists?
- Is there another way to convey the information (i.e., a press release, phone calls, a small briefing for key reporters, one-on-ones with reporters and the CEO)?
- Is the news visual?
- Is there a "name" person who will draw media to the event?
- Is there a proper setting for the news conference? Can the agency afford to host a respectable event?

Once all signals are go—there is agreement to move forward, the speakers have been secured, and a time has been set (usually between 9:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M.)—your attention should turn to:

1. **The setting**—the room and setup arrangements, signs, podium, microphone, audiovisual equipment, easels, press sign-in table, water for participants, coffee or cold drinks for the press.
2. **The materials**—written remarks for the participants, written and faxed announcements to the press plus follow-up calls to them, press kits, visual displays.
3. **The event itself**—order of speakers, persons responsible for introductions and visuals, possibly a still photographer.
4. **The follow-up**—individual interviews, mailings, monitoring the print and broadcast media for coverage.

Resources

For tips on writing press releases and conducting other media activities, try *Ink & Airtime: Working Effectively with the Media*, a publication of the National Crime Prevention Council (800/627–2911), or *How to Tell Your Story: Media Resource Guide*, from the Foundation for American Communications (213/851–7372).

Preparing for Interviews*

To avoid surprises, staff members should be given general guidelines to follow in preparing to talk with the media, in the course of the interview, and after the interview.

Before the Interview Begins

Staff members who have been asked to provide an interview should:

- Notify the person who has responsibility for dealing with the press of the request to be interviewed.
- Be punctual and respect reporters' schedules. Reporters usually work on tight deadlines. Ask how much time is available for the interview and don't prolong it.
- Conduct a pre-interview. Ask what topic area(s) will be covered and what types of questions can be expected. This is common practice and won't offend the reporter.
- Explain why inappropriate or confidential subject matter cannot be discussed and refer the reporter to the agency's press person.
- Dress appropriately. For television, avoid excessive jewelry, extreme styles or busy patterns that can distract viewers from the message.

During the Interview

Regardless of the media involved, staff members providing an interview should:

* Adapted with permission from *News Media Relations Manual*, Harris County Children's Protective Services, Houston, TX

- Maintain a professional demeanor, one that is cordial but avoids excessive glad-handing and back-slapping. An overly friendly attitude may look manipulative and suspicious to a reporter.
- Stick to their own areas of expertise and experience and not be drawn into other areas. Reporters who need additional information or interviews should be referred back to the press contact.
- Avoid personal statements that could be interpreted as agency opinion.
- Refrain from criticizing other staff, other divisions, or other agencies. Such criticisms are unprofessional and can become the focus of the story.
- Keep answers to 12 seconds. There will be less editing and misquoting.
- Never say "no comment." Staff members who can't or don't wish to answer a question should tell the reporter why and refer the reporter to the press office if appropriate.
- Have a point to make and use the questions to get that point across.
- Admit if they don't know something. However, they should tell the reporter they will try to find out. Avoid leaving a reporter empty-handed if at all possible.
- Never lie to the media. Integrity is important. If staff members can't give the whole truth, at least they should give nothing but the truth. Never ask a reporter to slant a story. Fair and accurate reporting is all that can be expected.
- Avoid jargon or acronyms. Don't force the reporter to act as an interpreter and set up the possibility of misquotes.
- Correct mistakes on the spot. It's easier than getting a retraction or correction.
- Try to relax. Use everyday speech. (This is no time to try to upgrade vocabulary.) Talk about the programs and work experience with pride and confidence.
- Within reason, be candid and forthcoming. Excessive caution can provoke suspicion.

After the Interview

At the completion of the interview, the staff member should:

- Thank the reporter and encourage him or her to visit again, where appropriate.
- Ask if any supplemental information for the story is needed. If so, contact the press office for assistance.
- Contact the press office to give a briefing on the interview. Such news media activities are logged in for future reference.

The Broadcast Interview

Much can be said about the television interview. There are two basic types—the friendly interview that is often initiated by the child welfare agency's press person and the ambush variety that is never arranged by the agency.

In addition to the general considerations listed above, the friendly interview requires the spokesperson to give particular attention to:

- **The message**—Have a good, crisp description of the program or activity. Lose the social work jargon and the acronyms. Don't ramble.
- **Conveying the message**—Give clear, concise responses. Think sound bites. Short, simple sentences are good. Look at the interviewer. Before taping an interview, take phones off the hook. Post a staff member or put a sign on the door to discourage visitors.
- **Appropriate expressions**—Be yourself. You know more about your topic than your interviewer, so relax.
- **Physical appearance**—Dress appropriately and avoid being too flashy. No blinding jewelry. Bright, strong, solid colors are good. Ninety percent of what the audience will remember is based on the visual, and only 10% on your message.
- **The setting**—Props (a book, a report or some other item) are OK if they are relevant to the discussion. Check out the background before taping for television. Sickly plants, lunch sacks, and other questionable objects should be set out of camera view.
- **Energy and enthusiasm**—Keep your levels up.
- **The crew**—Introduce yourself to the crew and treat them respectfully. They deserve it—and they can make you look good or bad.

The Ambush Interview

Ambush interviews are another story entirely. They usually follow a crisis and always come in an abrupt, startling manner. You do have choices. however, with regard to answering questions, so remember to keep your cool.

With planning, some negative events can be used to highlight your agency to positive advantage. Your agency should have a problem-response plan in place, including designated spokesperson (s). The best offense for hostile questions is to anticipate and prepare for them.

Additional Preparation*

Regardless of the form your media contacts take, the first step to getting your message across is to do your homework. Having the following information available will simplify your work.

People Research

- Who are the section and assignment editors? Where do they focus their stories?
- What reporters are most prominently featured? Do they write "your story"?
- Which reporters write "your story"? Read what they have written in the past, know their work. Are you sending your material to the wrong person?

Program Research

- Prepare a *15-word* description of your organization's mission. Use it when talking to the press.
- Know your agency's history and make it interesting.
- Know the demographics of your agency's clients and how they relate to today's news.
- Know the names of all the programs your agency offers and the names of their directors, and have a *15-word* description of each.

* Adapted with permission from Florence Crittenton Services of Orange County, CA.

- Have program statements—and a statement of need for each program—and be familiar with them.
- Know program goals and expected outcomes.
- Have annual statistics and client demographics prepared and available for each program and for the agency as a whole.
- Know your agency's finances: funding sources, income/expenses, program/administrative costs and development/fund-raising expenses.
- Collect documents and statistics that have information relevant to your programs and clients. Look into using a clipping service.
- Develop an information resource network for yourself.
- Be familiar with other agencies in your area that serve the same clients. Don't talk them down. Talk your agency up.
- If you can't answer a question, offer to get the answer or refer the reporter to someone you are sure has the information. Be absolutely sure the information you give is correct.

Resources

A good reference book for dealing with the media is Clarence Jones's *How To Speak TV, Print and Radio* (Video Consultants, Inc., Tampa, FL, 813/832–4137). The skills and strategies Jones describes are especially appropriate for people in the social services arena.

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention: Getting Your Message Out Through the Media is a handout available from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect (800/FYI-3366). It has good tips as well as outreach ideas and a resource list.

An excellent videotape, *How To Handle the News Media Interview,* was produced by a former San Francisco newscaster. It comes with an audiotape and a discussion guide, and is useful for individuals and groups (LaCosse Productions, Inc., 415/243-0423).

Executives who do a lot of TV may find a media coach to be an extremely valuable resource. While coaches don't come cheap, the cost for a half-day session with a professional media coach is money well spent. You'll learn about things you would never read in a text, discover what you're

doing right and wrong, and actually see dramatic before/after differences in your presentation. Independent media trainers can be found in most cities, and many PR firms have media training divisions.

Public Service Campaigns

At some point or another, agencies will want to take advantage of free time and space via use of public service materials. Most efforts involve a freebie here and there—a radio script or public service announcement (PSA) dashed off to local stations, talk show dates for the CEO, community calendar announcements, press releases about upcoming events such as health fairs, and other short-term activities.

The *public service campaign* is an effort to make use of free media time and space that is well planned and coordinated, and that includes an array of activities and products around a central theme. Such campaigns take time, thought and money, even though agencies seldom pay for the actual air time or the space in newspapers or magazines.

Generally a public service campaign—for example, one that focuses on preventing child abuse—will include different media and will be unfolded in stages, to benefit from repetition of the message over an extended period of time. In fact, the message and visuals can be varied for diverse audiences, and the information can be presented in languages other than English. For most local agencies, however, one message and one set of photographs or other artwork will suffice, especially if designed with the audience in mind.

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.
NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGN:
JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE
10 Steps to Implementing the Campaign in Your State

TASK	TARGET	DATE
1.	Draw up a list of TV (cable, too) and radio stations statewide to receive public service announcements, including each TV station's preference for 3/4" or 1" tape.	by April 12
2.	Identify magazines, newspapers and newsletters in your state (including minority, trade, university and others to targeted audiences) to approach for public service space for a print ad.	by April 12
3.	Have dubs made of TV and radio masters in quantity required for statewide coverage.	by April 26
4.	For print ads, take slicks to reproduction house to have appropriate number of sets made.	by April 26
5.	Mail TV and radio tapes to all stations, with hard copy of scripts and cover letter from agency head stressing that this is your state's contribution to a national campaign to highlight the child welfare field.	May 1
6.	Mail ad slicks to print media with cover letter requesting public service space and giving info on campaign.	May 1
7.	Make follow-up calls to all stations and print outlets regarding receipt of products, their plans to screen/ review tape (or print ads) and anticipated air/ print dates (if you can pin down at this stage).	May 8
8.	Contact TV and radio stations about length of time they plan to air campaign, and request return of tape at completion of run.	May 29
9.	Get in touch with CWLA's communications office to pass on any reactions and experiences in implementing campaign, so information can be shared with other states.	July 1
10.	Call stations to have tapes returned (or arrange for someone in that city end of run to pick them up for you).	

Sample Campaign Implementation Plan

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A typical public service campaign will consist of a mix of activities and products: TV and radio PSAs, talk show dates with the local broadcast media, letters to the editor or opinion pieces (op eds) for local daily newspapers, press releases, an editorial board with the principal local daily newspaper in order to enlighten editors on the issue, subway and bus cards secured at public service rates, various community events as appropriate, and bumper stickers or other giveaways.

Messages created for public service spots for television or radio should be "evergreen," that is, they should endure over time. It takes time for station public service directors to preview and schedule PSAs for rotation. Messages that involve dated material on upcoming functions should go to community calendar editors. Check with stations if you plan to use an 800 phone number (900 phone numbers generally are unacceptable on PSAs for nonprofits), as regulations vary. In fact, be certain to get each station's requirements before you send material, to ensure that you meet specifications and enhance your chance of getting free air time.

In addition to commercial television, local cable TV companies may also have time available. Public access TV is free and generally offers opportunities for inexpensively produced shows as well as public service spots. A small membership fee is sometimes required. Arrange to meet with staff at the station to discuss the best ways to become involved in creating community-oriented TV.

Radio stations often prefer scripts (10, 20, 30, or 60 seconds in length), which their anchors and deejays can read, over cassettes. Before having a message recorded and copies made for all the radio stations in your area, find out what they are most likely to use.

CWLA news release

Child Welfare League of America • 440 First Street, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20001-2085 • 202/638-2952 • FAX 202/638-4004

FOR USE THROUGH SUMMER OF 1996

CONTACT: Mary Layton
202/942-0251

60-SECOND RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ON KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Most of us have witnessed a scene in a supermarket, mall or other public place where an angry parent loses control and slaps his or her child. Maybe the child was crying or acting up. No matter what triggered it, the parent's action was regrettable.

The Child Welfare League of America offers some tips on how you can respond. You could strike up a conversation with the parent and divert attention away from the child. Try something like, "She seems to be trying your patience. My child used to get upset like that."

You could offer a compliment or praise, such as "Shopping with a toddler is a lot of work. I admire your effort." Or, you could say something to the child, like "What a big, strong boy you are." In any case, try to defuse the tension. If the situation is truly serious, alert the store manager. Whatever you do, don't give dirty looks or make snide remarks that could make matters worse.

This message was brought to you by the Child Welfare League of America—speaking up and speaking out for children.

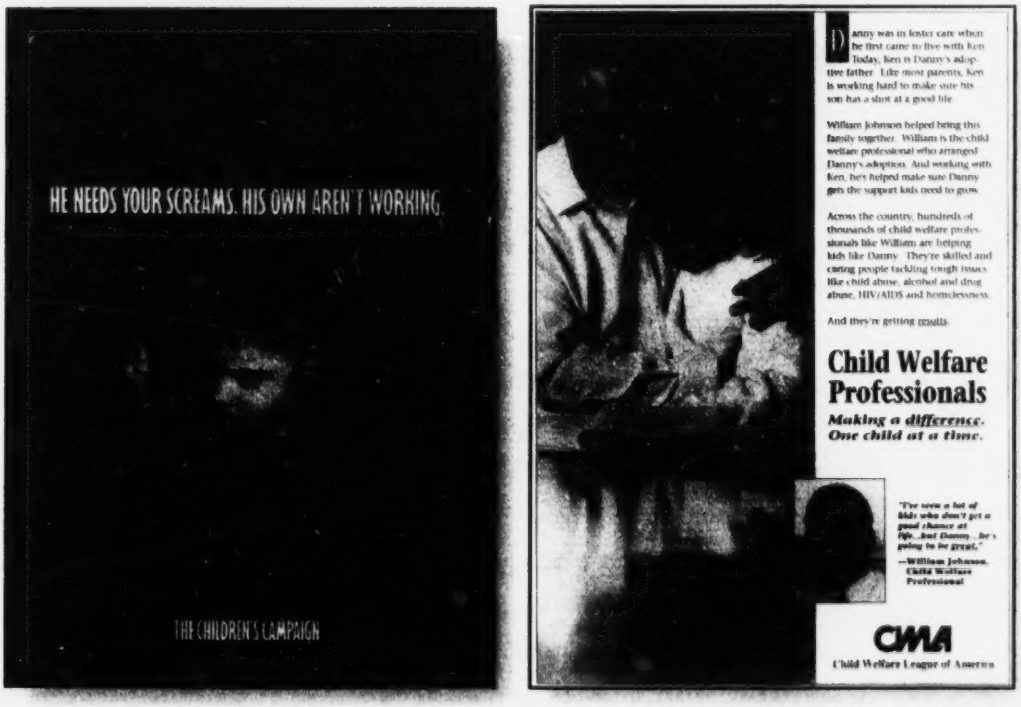
May 1996

Sample Radio Script

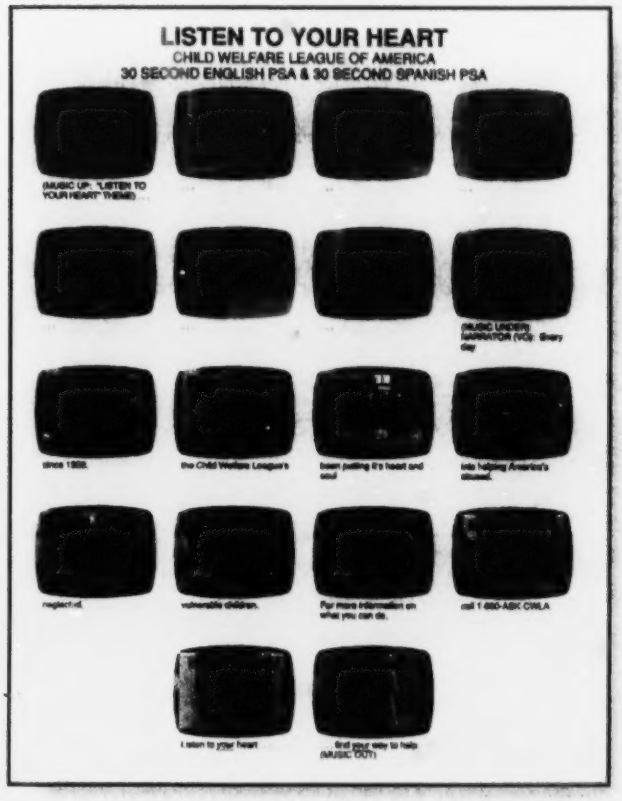
With regard to both TV and radio spots, use of a celebrity can strengthen the material, but there are risks. Consider the occasional disaster, where the celebrity you've chosen—say a local athlete or a retail mogul—transgresses in some public way and destroys the value of your message and your materials.

Print materials can include black and white ads for use in newspapers and other publications, including those published by schools and colleges, as well as local corporations that may be amenable to using your agency's material. Remember to contact all minority media in the area. The ads can be enlarged into posters, mounted, and distributed to businesses, waiting rooms and other locations. Many magazines set aside public service space that is worth inquiring about. Some sample print ads are shown below.

For agencies that can't swing the cost of a full campaign, joint or co-sponsored campaigns make sense, as they enable two or more like-minded groups to get more bang for limited bucks. Very often, universities or art schools are available to help with the design and production of campaign materials—at little or no cost. Many PR or advertising agencies will consider doing the work pro bono. Staffs of private, voluntary agencies with boards of directors should identify resources available on the board, including any PR and advertising expertise, and make use of them.


HE NEEDS YOUR SCREAMS. HIS OWN AREN'T WORKING.
THE CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN
Danny was in foster care when he first came to live with Ken. Today, Ken is Danny's adoptive father. Like most parents, Ken is working hard to make sure his son has a shot at a good life.
William Johnson helped bring this family together. William is the child welfare professional who arranged Danny's adoption. And working with Ken, he's helped make sure Danny gets the support kids need to grow.
Across the country, hundreds of thousands of child welfare professionals like William are helping kids like Danny. They're skilled and caring people tackling tough issues like child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and homelessness.
And they're getting results.
Child Welfare Professionals
Making a difference. One child at a time.
"I've seen a lot of kids who don't get a good chance at life...but Danny...he's going to be great."
—William Johnson, Child Welfare Professional
CWLA
Child Welfare League of America

Sample Print Advertisements



Sample TV Storyboard

Resources

An excellent guide to public service campaigns, *Strategic Media: Designing A Public Interest Campaign,* is part of a nine-book series published by the Benton Foundation (202/638-5770). Other themes in the series, which is intended to help nonprofit agencies improve their communications activity, are op eds, talk radio, video, cable TV, media advocacy and electronic networking.

Many TV stations publish brochures or pamphlets covering guidelines for public service materials. It is important to read these before producing spots, to know what each station requires—3/4" or 1" tapes, number of copies, accompanying material such as story boards or scripts, and other useful information.

Satellite Media Tours

For those who seek imposing media exposure, satellite media tours (SMT) can be considered as a way to reach audiences in numerous cities throughout a state or nationwide. These tours are generally arranged through a company with booking know-how. They don't come cheap and they are impractical for organizations wanting to reach audiences in small geographic areas. For agencies and organizations that desire broad outreach and can afford to spend a few thousand dollars on a media tour, however, the method is worth considering.

Through satellite media tours, an agency's spokesperson can reach nu-

merous stations in one sitting, from one studio. Key markets can be targeted. Interviews can be live or taped. The booking company will pitch the interview to radio or TV stations, produce video for satellite tours involving TV stations, book studios, purchase satellite time, fax alerts to radio stations, conduct post-interview monitoring, and provide feedback on station usage. Most full-service public relations agencies can assist with satellite tours, and many smaller firms specialize in broadcast tours of all sizes and descriptions.

Interview Tips for Satellite Media Tours*

- Have your spokesperson available in the studio or remote location early enough so that he or she can become comfortable with the lights, cameras, setup and gear. If more than one camera is used, be sure camera techniques are discussed.
- Make sure your spokesperson is acquainted with the IFB (audio apparatus and earpiece through which questions and directions will be heard). Test it out a few times.
- Your spokesperson should have either some experience or media interview training, prepping, etc., prior to an SMT appearance. The SMT scheduling should include at least 10 minutes during which some Q & A "practice" time is available on camera, unless your spokesperson is experienced.
- An unseasoned spokesperson should be made familiar with basic interview techniques such as getting to key points early and not repeating negative terms the interviewer throws out.
- While some interviews may be "live" on air, most will be recorded for editing or real-time playback later. If your spokesperson seems overly commercial to the broadcasters, the interview could be scrapped. It has happened.
- Check makeup. A touch here and there may be required. Some "freshening" is almost always necessary during the SMT.
- Your spokesperson should be familiar, prior to beginning the SMT, with the list of broadcasters scheduled to do the interviews. Use

* Adapted with permission from News/Broadcast Network, Inc., Washington, DC.

either a teleprompter or a cue card to keep the name of the current interviewer and location available for easy reference by the spokesperson. Factual references that can "localize" an interview are always welcomed by stations.

- Many SMT interviews are relatively short, perhaps less than three minutes, particularly if they are live. Answers should be concise. If the interview is going to be excerpted for a newscast, editors look for 15-second soundbites.

Issues and Strategies

Confidentiality

While laws vary with jurisdictions and states, they generally provide for privacy of a client's records and face, preventing frontal or identifying photographs of children, for example. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires states to provide a method to preserve the confidentiality of all records to protect the rights of the child and the child's parents or guardians, including measures to ensure that disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect is made only to persons or entities that the state determines have a need to know. Informed reporters will know that confidentiality is a matter of federal law, not just policy, and be less inclined than those unfamiliar with your services to expect you to provide privileged information.

Even when reporters understand some of the constraints of confidentiality laws, they are concerned with their deadlines and the need to file stories or tape interviews. If it is necessary to explain what's involved, take time to do so. Don't avoid the subject of confidentiality and how it affects your work and theirs.

Whether or not there is a need to explain confidentiality laws, it will be important to have facts and materials readily available for reporters so that you can be cooperative in providing timely, accurate information. Have in mind the significant points you want to make on the particular issue or story. Use those points over and over with each interview. Be prepared and helpful.

Even when effort has been made to establish good rapport with reporters early on, there is no guarantee you will be satisfied with all they write. But the more reporters know about federal and state laws and about how the agency operates—its policies, procedures and principles—the more likely you are to get balanced stories.

Crisis Situations

Confusion around crises can be minimized by having in place a crisis communications plan that is well understood by agency staff. A key word here is "minimized," since a certain level of confusion and panic is unavoidable in a crisis situation.

An effective communication plan would include distinct efforts to know and educate reporters and other journalists who cover child and family issues for the local media. This of course is best done before a crisis hits—not only to ensure the likelihood of their understanding of confidentiality issues and other relevant restrictions, but also to enhance overall coverage of the agency. If you are dealing with reporters who know you and your agency, opportunities for good, fair coverage are increased while the probability of ambushes and uninformed coverage is reduced.

When a crisis situation occurs—a child death, a calamity in a family foster home, a facility fire or some other disaster, or staff mismanagement or malfeasance—it is important to be able to act quickly and decisively. Know which people are essential to the crucial initial discussions and gather them immediately. Sit down with key staff and do intensive interviews, so facts are on the table and informed decisions can be made as to what qualifies as public information and what is privileged information.

Major emergencies or crises demand a command center. Smaller ones can be handled from existing arrangements. In any case, it is advisable to have one spokesperson as the agency press contact, often but not necessarily the CEO. All calls should be referred to that person, and others should be discouraged from making comments or offering opinions. Consider organizing one-on-one meetings for the CEO or another principal with reporters, in addition to the customary press briefings.

In any crisis situation, honesty is always the best policy. It is important to be as forthcoming as possible with the press, without getting into fuzzy zones, speculation or areas of confidentiality. Where possible, give direct responses to questions and avoid unnecessarily protracted replies and embellishment. Keep staff well informed, along with the children themselves if a residential facility is involved, parents if appropriate, and the agency board of directors. Regular updates are desirable, with varying amounts of detail according to the needs of each group.

Cross-agency communication is equally critical. In situations affecting

public agencies, in particular, there may be more than one agency involved. Those connected with the child welfare agency might need to hold talks with representatives of hospitals, police departments, juvenile courts or school systems before talking with the press, to ensure accuracy.

It is not unusual for both public and nonprofit, voluntary agencies to be required to counter bad press at some point. Consider the following:

- A fact sheet presenting chronological details of the crisis.
- An op ed piece containing details and interpretations.
- A press conference to provide opportunity to give details.
- A tour of the facility in question.
- Discussions on local news and talk shows.
- Releases covering operational changes or news updates.
- Statements of support from other groups or individuals who understand the situation.

Among actions and activities to avoid at any cost: lying or saying "no comment" to the press, stalling or stonewalling the press, ignoring press calls, giving off-the-record interviews, permitting more that one person to speak for the agency, using social work jargon, and failing to regularly convene meetings of key staff to get updates and plan next steps.

Marketing Strategies

One hot area for communications people is "social marketing" or the application of commercial marketing methods to promoting health and social issues. The 10 steps listed below are critical to your agency's success.*

1. Talk to customers (clients) to find out what they need and want.
2. Segment the audience in order to provide different messages for different groups—clients, donors, media, policymakers, board.
3. Position the "product" or service (which may mean removing obstacles to obtaining it).
4. Know the competition, as your service must be competitive and attractive to potential clients.

* Developed by Nedra Kline Weinreich of Weinreich Communications, Greenbrae, CA.

5. Go to where your audience is—know where they get their news, what stations they listen to, where they spend their free time.
6. Use a variety of approaches—media, community activities, individual activities. Message repetition is key.
7. Use models that work. Your goal is to convince people to move from contemplating a service such as counseling to being motivated to act.
8. Test, test, test. Your products, promotional materials and services should be tested for their effectiveness. The use of focus groups is one of the best known methods.
9. Build partnerships with key allies, as pooling resources can increase impact.
10. See what you can do better next time. Evaluation is critical.

The Communications Plan

A *PR or communications plan* represents an opportunity to think through activities that will enhance your agency's visibility and help achieve objectives. It creates a reality-based projection of budgetary needs for PR activities, and provides a base for reviewing the year's accomplishments.

If you want your plan to be truly useful, put your thoughts on paper. The agency's communications plan can be laid out in an infinite variety of shapes and forms, and can include as much detail as desirable. Plans can be done for an entire year or for calendar quarters. Activities can be subdivided into "print activities," "broadcast activities," "special events" and any other groupings selected, or they can be lumped together as in the following example. Please note that agencies with several people in their communications departments must add another column: "Person responsible."

Resources

Information on creating a communications plan, as well as tips on numerous other aspects of marketing and communications, can be found in *Marketing Matters: Building an Effective Communications Program*, available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (800/FYI-3366).

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS/PR PLAN

FISCAL YEAR 1996 (OCTOBER-SEPTEMBER)

OBJECTIVES: To greatly increase awareness of CWLA and to promote understanding of key child welfare issues.
GOALS: In the coming year, our main goals will be to keep child protection as an entitlement and to encourage healthy children, families and communities.
NEWS HOOKS: The overarching theme of news activities is preventing child abuse and neglect and improving life for those served by the nation's child welfare system. Specific topics around which to peg activities include the following, all of which have news value and can contribute to the realization of objectives and goals for FY 1996: state-by-state child welfare stat book, child sexual abuse, child deaths caused by abuse and neglect, children dying of AIDS, parents dying of AIDS and the need to select "second families," child abandonment, the increase in kinship care, family preservation, positive parenting, transracial adoption, adoption by gays and lesbians, teenage mothers and fathers, teens impregnated by adult men, privatization of child welfare services, the need for national standards, intergenerational programs, affordable housing for low income families, and the effects of violence on children.
POSSIBLE THEMES TO REPEAT DURING YEAR: Guarding children's rights, serving children's needs. Positive parenting. Healthy children, families and communities.
AUDIENCES TO ADDRESS: General public, elected officials, CWLA member agencies, other national organizations and the media.

ACTIVITIES	TIMING	COST
Produce public service spots for radio and TV promoting healthy children and families—positive parenting	spring 96	$60,000/funding to be sought
Schedule radio and TV talk show appearances	ongoing	---
Write and distribute by-line columns	4/year	$12,000
Send op eds to newspapers across the country	ongoing	---
Respond to articles, editorials and opinion pieces that appear around the country/letters to editors	ongoing	---
Hold press conferences to highlight various newsworthy issues	as needed	small cost
Produce special programming for public radio satellite network on topics such as welfare reform, block grants, various political considerations	12 three-minute modules/year	production cost = $120/module
Prepare analyses of presidential candidates' positions on children's issues; develop yardsticks for measuring candidates' responses to needs of children and families; issue report cards	spring 96	---

continued on next page

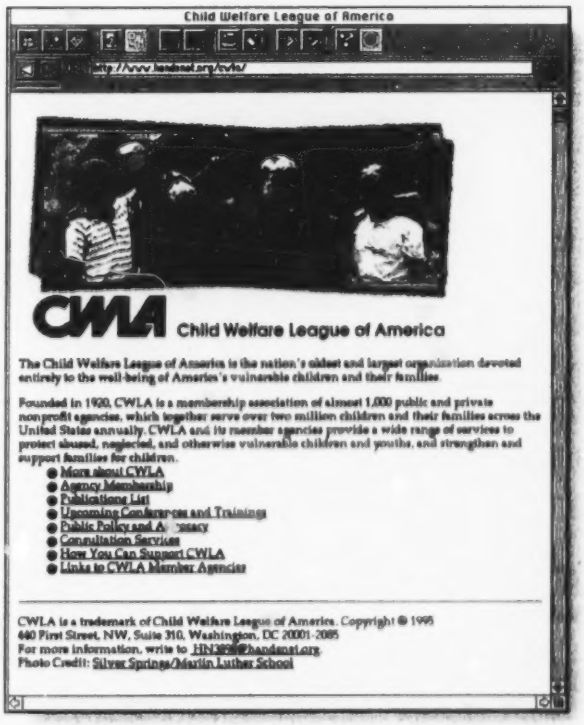
Pursue corporate and sports' linkages to spawn PR opportunities that generate visibility	ongoing	possibly some travel expenses
Issue press releases on surveys, reports, journal, events and announcements	ongoing	postage
Support planning efforts for '96 national conference	fall/winter	---
Pitch variety of stories based on news hooks (above) to local and national press, including print reporters and editors as well as producers of evening news and other TV shows	ongoing	---
Arrange editorial boards and interviews for director corresponding to travels around country	ongoing	---
Schedule one-on-one meetings with director and key reporters	1/month	---
Involve member agencies in achieving goals through use of reprints, op eds and other placements, and various other media-related activities; also involve agency communications people at national conference	ongoing	---
Publicize new child welfare journalism award to members and media groups	fall/winter	---
Expand outreach to trade, minority and college publications through use of material tailored to their audiences	ongoing	---
Train CWLA staff in dealing with media and being active part of CWLA's communication team	fall 95	---
Maintain participation with various groups such as Communications Consortium to promote child welfare issues	ongoing	none unless we go in on ad
Respond to calls from press and general public about full range of issues	ongoing	---
Plan and help produce national video conference related to release of state-specific statistics and welfare reform	fall 95	depends on availability of donated facilities
Help plan and publicize special activities—state events, golf tournament, rallies, forums and media panels—that will generate visibility for CWLA	as appropriate	will vary
Write material for publication as appropriate—fact sheets, articles and pieces such as those connected with the proposed "What is CPS?" project	as appropriate	---
Capture opportunity to air new public service spot in 24,000 stores through ACTRADIO	fall 95	---

Final Thoughts

The Internet

HandsNet, an electronic network of more than 5,000 human services professionals, is fully accessible via the Internet. Through this network, agencies avail themselves of a broad spectrum of information on child welfare programs, practice and policy, as well as other human services issues, posted on a daily basis. Many agencies and organizations now have their own home pages on the World Wide Web, belong to HandsNet, and access and share material on a regular basis.

A valuable resource for information about HandsNet and Internet access is the Child Welfare League of America's Library and Information Services Division (202/942–0265). CWLA serves as manager of the Child Welfare Forum on the network.


Child Welfare League of America
CWLA
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The Child Welfare League of America is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted entirely to the well-being of America's vulnerable children and their families.
Founded in 1920, CWLA is a membership association of almost 1,000 public and private nonprofit agencies, which together serve over two million children and their families across the United States annually. CWLA and its member agencies provide a wide range of services to protect abused, neglected, and otherwise vulnerable children and youths, and strengthen and support families for children.
More about CWLA
Agency Membership
Publications List
Upcoming Conferences and Trainings
Public Policy and Advocacy
Consultation Services
How You Can Support CWLA
Links to CWLA Member Agencies
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440 First Street, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20001-2085
For more information, write to HN1[illegible]@handsnet.org
Photo Credit: Silver Springs/Martin Luther School

CWLA's Web Site

Agency Publications

The chief publications-related topics that come up among child welfare PR people are writing and producing *newsletters*, effective *direct mail pieces*, publication *design*, successfully dealing with *printers, mailing and postage*,

and selecting the best *desktop publishing equipment* for particular needs. Ample information is available on each topic, and workshops on virtually all aspects of publishing are plentiful.

For those who need help and ideas but prefer not to register for a seminar or workshop, consider contacting experts in either public or private child welfare agencies, publishing businesses in your area or the publications departments of local universities or art schools. Don't overlook resources that are available through your agency's board of directors, as board members may have good connections in this area.

Speakers' Bureau

Large agencies may need a cadre of speakers to fan out through the community and speak to groups, clubs and associations. The speakers should be carefully selected so that they capably represent the purpose and diversity of the agency. They should be thoughtfully prepared to ensure that the agency's mission is understood, have good, clear written materials as handouts, and be monitored and evaluated to determine whether or not they are representing the organization in the fashion intended. And all volunteers for the speakers bureau—be they staff, board members or others—need occasional feedback and stroking. Consider an annual volunteers' luncheon, gift certificates, plaques, or dinner passes.

Special Events and Promotions

The sky is the limit with regard to events and promotions. From the most typical events—health fairs, walk-a-thons and golf outings, annual dinners, adoption fairs, awards luncheons, and so forth—to more exotic undertakings such as Mardi Gras and casino nights or cruises to nowhere, child welfare agencies sponsor fund-raising activities to heighten visibility. Many agencies view cosponsored events as ways of increasing their impact in the community while sharing the expense of organizing and producing them. For large events, some agencies hire an event planner to cover details, leaving staff free to concentrate on ticket sales. Most agencies, how-

ever, draw on their own public relations, fund development and other staff to coordinate special events that are not overwhelming in size and nature.

Some cosponsored events and/or campaigns involve partnerships not with other social service agencies but rather with companies such as retail stores, banks and theater groups. For agencies that can interest outside groups in their work and develop productive, sustained alliances, fertile fund development can be the result.

In addition to these events, child welfare agencies should look for special opportunities for stand-alone publicity that is often free. For example national organizations can gain visibility through ACTRADIO (203/845–6000), which provides programmed tapes of music and information to tens of thousands of supermarkets and drug stores nationwide. Each tape includes a public service announcement promoting the work of a selected organization.

Regular networking with other organizations is a good way to build in time for brainstorming ideas for events and activities, and to scout potential linkages and support.

Archives

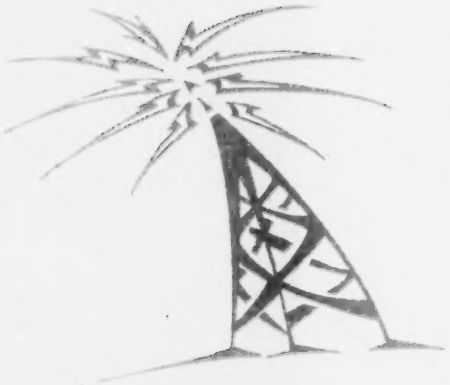
All too often, PR people are frustrated with the absence of old publications such as annual reports and brochures, historic as well as more recent photographs, audio and videotapes that document earlier activities or campaigns, and other materials that would shed light on the agency's past communications work and its history.

It is crucial that material be catalogued and stored, so that those who follow can have the institutional records. Ideally, samples of old PR documents and materials should be stored in one room in the agency for easy reference. There is one exception: videotape, especially B-rolls and extra footage left over from filming public service spots and other broadcast pieces, should be kept in a temperature-controlled storage space to preserve it for possible future use.

Beyond the historical value of maintaining records and documentation, it is useful to note a truth that is engraved on a statue at the entrance to the National Archives in the nation's capital: The past is prologue.

About the Author

Mary J. Layton, who joined the Child Welfare League of America in 1989 as communications director, has been involved for more than two decades in public relations and communications work with nonprofit organizations as well as federal, state and local governmental agencies. She has a B.A. from Michigan State University and an M.A. from New York University.



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